

Customer Services

Equal Civil Marriages Consultation

A Home Office consultation has been launched on "Equal Civil Marriages", which proposes to introduce same-sex civil marriage in addition to civil partnerships, and to introduce a process where existing civil partners can, if they choose, convert their partnership to a marriage. Religious marriages (i.e. one man one woman) would remain unchanged. The proposals are likely to be controversial, and will introduce further complexity for the registration service.

Protection of Freedoms Bill

The Protection of Freedoms Bill will become law later this year. One provision is that the restriction on the time when a marriage or civil partnership registration can take place, currently 8am to 6pm, will be removed. So ceremonies can be any time, 24 hours per day. Competitive pressures are likely to drive us to take advantage of this change. This raises a number of issues that need to be addressed by the Registration Service e.g. staff compensation, health & safety, planning permission, setting customer charges and many others. These will need to be resolved for likely implementation in late summer.

Children and Young People's Services (CYPS)

Winter Warmer sessions

Children's Centres were successful in applying for funding from the joint bid to the Warm Homes, Healthy People Project, led by Cambridgeshire County Council and Public Health. Successful Winter Warmer sessions have been delivered in all Cambridgeshire's forty Children's Centres, providing cooking and eating workshops together with an information session provided by Young Lives focusing on benefits advice, grants for insulation, seasonal health issues and immunisation, applying for Free School Meals, etc. This has been a successful joint project with partners.

OFSTED Inspection Visits

An OFSTED thematic safeguarding inspection for disabled children took place on 7 and 8 March 2012. The visit included several focus groups with managers and practitioners as well as detailed inspection of a small number of randomly selected cases. The thematic inspection was as a positive opportunity for us and our partners to focus on the needs of disabled children. The learning from it will be helpful as improve our practice ahead of a future OFSTED inspection of the wider service. Some key points of feedback from the inspector were:

- Strong multi-agency working that was evident for disabled children and the commitment of partners to these services
- Cambridgeshire has good access to a wide range of support services, both at home, in the community and in terms of overnight stays and residential services.
- Referrals and assessments for disabled children were evident from a wide range of sources and that these were good quality.
- A strong commitment from social workers and other practitioners to engaging parents and building good relationships even where families were reluctant to work with professionals or where barriers to engagement exist.

The voice of the child had come through strongly - the inspectors commented specifically that practitioners were committed to finding strategies to ensure that children with disabilities were able to be heard, even where their communication difficulties made this more challenging.

- The majority of the cases highlighted good social work and multi-agency involvement. There were strong examples of robust child protection plans, prompt referrals and very positive

feedback from the parents of a child in need case where our effective response to a family really struggling had significantly improved their situation and made a real difference in their lives.

- The early support cases the inspectors worked through showed evidence of good outcomes and a positive impact, both for the children's development and on the capacity of the parents involved. The inspectors described "*well established early support teams, providing appropriate support to families with children with disabilities up to the age of 5*"
The inspectors highlighted a number of individual areas where we can improve and themes we will want to reflect on as we continue to transform safeguarding services in Cambridgeshire.
- The need for a single and very focussed plan for every disabled child was a recurring theme.
- The way we record casework on our systems and the data quality in relation to disabled children isn't consistently good enough.
- The inspectors challenged us around whether we are asking enough questions of ourselves at the strategic level in relation to our service response and safeguarding arrangements for disabled children, were we scrutinising the impact of CIN and CP plans for disabled children and trends in the data through our strategic disability groups and the LSCB, for example.
- In relation to early support the key area of feedback was around CAF and its use to ensure that access to services is always via a coordinated pathway and that services are coherent together - they felt our interventions in terms of early support were individually good but sometimes in isolation.

Because this is a thematic inspection, rather than a statutory one, there will not be a published formal report or grading but we will continue to reflect on the feedback received and to ensure that appropriate teams are involved in taking the learning forward.

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Forthcoming Peer Review

Children and Young People's Services has invited a peer review of our safeguarding arrangements that will take place from 23-27 April 2012. The peer review is not an inspection; it is designed to be a supportive but challenging process, which stimulates local discussion, to assist authorities in celebrating their strengths and identifying areas for improvement. The scope of the peer review covers safeguarding in a broad sense, and therefore the whole system in Cambridgeshire, including all CYPS directorates (not only Children's Social Care), schools, our partners (in particular health), Adult Services and the strategic bodies (such as the LSCB) appointed to oversee services to safeguard children. A set of key lines of enquiries have been developed and these areas have been deliberately identified within CYPS as areas for development, rather than existing strengths. The review team will be led by John Gregg; Assistant Director for Children's Social Care at Suffolk County Council and will also include a lead councillor for Children's Services, 2 social work lead practitioners, a health manager/practitioner and an off-site data analyst, all from other authorities nationally. Prior to the peer review, we will be undertaking a range of preparatory work to support the Review Team.

Seeing through a child's eyes: OFSTED announces no-notice, inspections of child protection services.

OFSTED is to introduce 2-week, no-notice inspections for child protection services which will begin in May this year. The new inspection regime will in effect replace the previous 2-week announced inspections of Safeguarding and Looked After Children. Although the focus is explicitly on child protection, OFSTED have been very clear that inspectors will be interested in the whole of the child's journey including an evaluation of the help that children and their families do or don't get when problems first emerge. This means the inspection will look for the first time in detail at the role of universal, preventative and early intervention services in protecting children, as well as the work of Social Care. Cambridgeshire could be one of the first authorities to be inspected under the new arrangements and we have formed a cross directorate working group to

prepare and to ensure we are doing all we can to provide an integrated system that keeps children safe.

School Funding Reform

The Department for Education (DfE) have launched a consultation on *School funding reform: Next steps towards a fairer system*. The consultation document explains how they plan to proceed with the reform until the end of the current Spending Review period. It contains a number of important announcements and invites views on areas where there are different options. Key points from the document include: confirmation that the DfE will work towards introducing a national funding formula in the next Spending Review period; setting the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) at minus 1.5% for 2013-14 and 2014-15; local funding arrangements will be simplified, more funding will be directed towards schools by default, and Schools Forums' role will be reformed; the Education Funding Agency (EFA) will play a strong role in ensuring fairness within the new system; there will be a new methodology for funding high need pupils, and the funding of early years provision will be simplified and made more transparent. All of this will have significant implications for schools and services. CYPS are currently considering the impact on service provision and how we work with schools.

Academies Update

Secondary Schools:

St Bede's Church School converted into an academy on 1 March 2012. Four Secondary schools are due to convert in May 2012 (Sir Harry Smith, Cromwell Community College, Neale Wade Community College and Thomas Clarkson Community College). Manor Community College and Netherhall remaining as maintained schools.

Primary / Middle Schools:

There are currently eight Primary schools who have converted so far, with Middlefield School sponsoring Winhills Primary school due to convert on 1 July 12. Park Lane Primary and Godmanchester Primary due to convert on 1 September 2012. This will leave 191 maintained Primary Schools.

Special Schools:

Meadowgate Special School are due to convert in October 12

Children's Centre Funding 2012/13

Children's Centres are developing budgets on the funding formula developed in Autumn 2011. The formula is based on deprivation in a 'reach' area and the total number of children under 5 in the 'reach', including a factor adjusted for demographic changes in new communities. Some centres will need to make some adjustments to take into consideration the overall savings requirement, but services continue to be viable at all centres.

European Social Fund (ESF) Families Programme

Department for Work and Pensions have combined forces with the European Social Fund to invest in new support for families with multiple problems where worklessness is a key barrier to better outcomes. This initiative will start from 2012 in Cambridgeshire and run to 2015. This additional support will come via Family Employment Advisers (FEAs) who will work directly with families to help them back into the labour market. The North Cambridge locality will be one of the first areas to benefit from this programme and the Locality Team are intending to working very closely with the FEAs as the team are likely to know, and already be in contact and supporting, many of these families. This initiative offers a great opportunity for joint working and to extend the 'team around the family' approach.

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND CITY AREA

Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs) and Unknown Figures – Cottenham and Swavesey Locality

Locality Integrated Youth Support Staff continue to work to ensure that the levels of Unknown

and NEET young people across the Locality remain low. There are currently 30 NEET young people, with 23 of those available for further education, training or employment; the target for the locality is 30. The number of unknown young people who we are actively trying to trace is currently 20, half the target of 40. These are pleasing numbers considering the current economic climate.

Maybe Baby Plus – Cambridge South Locality

Five young people who completed a 4 day intensive babysitting course (Maybe Baby) were selected to attend a 3 day residential at The Chellington Centre, Bedfordshire. The aims of the project were to give the group a more realistic experience of life as a teenage parent; to develop independence and explore their aspirations. The individuals were given a small budget in which they had to buy food, pay bills and pay for social activities. The group had to make sacrifices to ensure they had enough money to last them throughout the project. On completing the residential the young people said that they would want their first child between the ages of 22-26 years, a significant difference to when asked prior to Maybe Baby (age ranges between 16-22 years) and that they would like to focus on a career and 'experiencing life' before embarking on parenthood. This pilot has been extremely positive and we hope to be able to offer this on an annual basis to graduates of the Maybe Baby course who may need ongoing support.

Economy, Transport and Environment

Transforming Economy, Transport and Environment Services

Interviews are to be held 29 March - 17 April for the remaining heads of service posts.

The joint heads of service and Directors group will be meeting for the third time on 27 March. A 'pulse survey' was recently launched to gauge how employees are feeling during this time, to give a chance for people to raise issues that are concerning them and to take steps to address these, and to track how people's perceptions may change over time. Work is now underway to further shape the workstreams and projects which will form the Transformation programme. Additional communications channels such as a Blog and staff forum are also in development.

Superfast broadband – Connecting Cambridgeshire

Connecting Cambridgeshire is the working name for the project to bring access to superfast broadband to at least 90% of homes and businesses across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, and better broadband for everyone by 2015. Cambridgeshire County Council is responsible for the delivery of this major project working together with Peterborough City Council, District Councils, the Greater Cambridgeshire and Greater Peterborough Enterprise Partnership, and partners in business, health and education. A well attended Supplier Day held in February marked the start of the formal procurement process. The Connecting Cambridgeshire website will go live in April 2012, supporting the launch of a countywide campaign to encourage residents, businesses and communities to register their demand for better broadband online, or on paper. Members and employees of Cambridgeshire County, Peterborough City and the four District councils will be invited to register their support for campaign during a 'soft launch' over the Easter period prior to the public launch of the website.

INFRASTRUCTURE, MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS

Highway Minor Improvements

Bids for the 2012/13 programme are being assessed and panel meetings, to determine local Member views on bid priorities, are being set up during March and April. The views of the Member panels will be considered by the Portfolio Holder and Executive Director before funding allocations are confirmed. In each district area the programme is over-subscribed and it will be necessary to reduce the number of bids going forward to each local panel meeting to make the bid assessment process manageable for the member panels. Officers are working with local Member panels to prioritise those bids that go forward for consideration.

Winter Service

54 gritting runs have been undertaken so far this season which is significantly lower than the past two seasons. As a result it was not necessary to replenish salt stocks during January as originally planned. Currently salt supplies are at around a quarter of storage capacity. Stocks will be replenished from May when prices typically fall. Positive feedback has been received on the joint working undertaken with district councils and local volunteers, although it is recognised that further work is required to encourage and facilitate wider local community involvement. A review of the winter season is planned to start in May.

Controlled Waste Regulations

The Controlled Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2012 were laid before Parliament on 15 March 2012, and will come into force on 6 April 2012. These Regulations will enable local authorities to charge for the disposal of waste from a wider range of non-domestic premises than before, for example, universities and hospitals. The Council is currently reviewing the impact of changes and any implications or opportunities for the Council.

Public and Agricultural Analyst Contract

The County Council is required by statute to appoint a Public Analyst and Agricultural Analyst in order to fulfil its obligations enforcing food safety and agricultural legislation, which is carried out by the Trading Standards Officers working within the Helping Business and Communities Team. Public and agricultural analysts possess specific qualifications enabling them to conduct analyses and provide certificates to the County Council for any further action if required. The contract tender has been issued and has been advertised in accordance with European requirements. It is for two years, with an option to extend for a further year. This is a departure from previous practice, as contracts hitherto have been for three years plus a two year option, in order to provide the authority with greater flexibility.

Government Response to the Farming Regulation Task Force Report

Government has recently published its response to the report completed by the Task Force,

chaired by Richard Macdonald. The report contained 220 recommendations and the Government is minded to implement a significant number of them, leading to a transformation in the way the sector is regulated. The concept of earned recognition is to be adopted. This is where membership of an assurance scheme, such as Red Tractor, will earn a lower risk rating for that business and thereby a lower inspection frequency from all regulators. The East of England Farm Inspection Forum has been recognised as best practice.

RECAP Advanced Waste Programme

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Waste Partnership, RECAP, is proceeding with further steps towards reviewing the cases for a Joint Waste Committee, developing a Joint Trade Waste Venture and sharing in joint procurement. This will involve appraising the options and considering progress made by other waste partners towards service integration. The Partnership Charter, defining the new vision for the partnership, objectives and guiding principles for joint working, is being endorsed by each of the Programme partners.

Waste Management Design Guide

The RECAP Waste Management Design Guide was adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document on 22 February by Peterborough City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council. The document provides guidance to developers on both the design of waste management infrastructure for residential and commercial developments and their contributions for the provision of such infrastructure. It therefore ensures that sustainable waste management is designed into new developments in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Department for Transport – Traffic Signs Policy Review

The DfT has conducted a Traffic Signs Policy Review, which has set out a framework to ensure that the traffic system meets the future needs of all road users, while building upon the existing and established traffic sign system. It sets out recommendations for improving the information

that traffic signs communicate to road users by providing more freedom for decisions about signing at the local level. The resulting changes to the Traffic Signs Regulations and Directions came into force at the end of January 2012.

Events for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the Olympics

The Traffic Manager's Team has been working closely with local event organisers for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the Olympics. The team has simplified the process by producing a quick and easy form for street parties and giving clear advice on the CCC website. The process is free for local and community events, and the team is also investing in some signage for organisers to borrow. So far there has been great enthusiasm shown with 50 applications received for street parties across Cambridgeshire, and at least a further eight organisers expressing interest. Towns and parishes are also planning events such as walks, parades, fetes and fairs.

STRATEGY AND DEVELOPMENT

A14 update

The A14 Study, led by the DfT with a major input from the County Council is progressing with a view to concluding in July. An initial report detailing the Issues and Challenges facing the A14 has been published, (and can be accessed at <http://www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/dft-20111212>). The Council also hosted a seminar with a range of influential organisations attending, to feed into the Government's consultative "A14 Challenge". The meeting discussed the congestion hit stretch of the A14 between Cambridge and Huntingdon as well as the broader issues affecting the whole of the route. There was general agreement that it is not just a Cambridgeshire problem or even national but European as well. The short term improvements offered by the Government are very welcome but long term solutions are also needed to be delivered as soon as possible.

Local Sustainable Transport Fund

On 24 February, a bid was submitted for £5m funding from the second round of the government's Local Sustainable Transport Fund. The bid focuses on the travel to work journey on two of the key economic corridors in Cambridgeshire – between Ely and Cambridge and between Huntingdon and Cambridge. It includes schemes and initiatives to encourage and facilitate greater use of sustainable transport modes for part or all of a journey. The government is expected to announce the successful bidders before the end of July. The bid can be viewed at <http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/transport/strategies/fundingbids/LSTF.htm>

Growing Places Fund - Call for projects

A list of project proposals from Cambridgeshire and our Local Authority partners have now been submitted to the LEP. These proposals will be reviewed and shortlisted by the LEP's Investment Sub-group before being put before the LEP Board for a final decision.

Better Bus Areas Fund

On 24 February a bid for £1.73m funding from the government's Better Bus Areas Fund was also submitted. The BBAF is seeking to fund measures that will contribute to economic growth and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases, and is aimed at large urban areas. Cambridgeshire's successful bid focuses on Cambridge city centre and four of the key radial routes into the city, and has the support of the city and south Cambridgeshire District Council, as well as both Stagecoach and Whippet Coaches. The bid can be viewed at:

<http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/transport/strategies/fundingbids/bbaf.htm>

EU funding opportunities

EU funding opportunities are being explored, particularly in terms of Sustainable Transport, energy efficiency and Infrastructure as we prepare for a new cycle of EU funding from 2013. A meeting was held with our Brussels Office to discuss opportunities. Intense negotiations are underway for an EU Project entitled Mobilising Local Energy Investment where this project (which is supported by most Local Authorities in Cambridgeshire) if approved, will help bring greater energy self-sufficiency for Cambridgeshire, build community and business resilience to increasing costs of fuel bills and help bridge energy supply gaps predicted for 2019 onwards.

Funding for delivering key schemes

Agreement has now been secured to officer recommendations for transport projects to be funded from s106 developer contributions from both the East Area and South Area Committees in Cambridge. The South Area Committee which met to consider recommendations on 5 March also made suggestions on new schemes, which officers will take into consideration and report back on. The West/Central Area Committee also received a report on the 1 March, to inform them regarding the s106 allocation process and future schemes which are proposed for delivery. A report with Officers recommendations for the Northern Corridor Area Transport Plan will be reported to members of the North Area Committee on 17 May. Once all comments have been received from the respective Area Committees on the officer recommendations, Cabinet approval will be sought to allocate the s106 contributions to the proposed projects for delivery this year. Next financial year the officer recommendation for funding for key schemes process will start again. Joint officer panels, consisting of officers from each of the councils considering transport priorities within their respective district areas, will be making recommendations on suitable projects. Recommendations will then be sent to members for commenting on proposed projects in their respective areas, prior to submission to Cabinet for approval, under the agreed process.

Cambridge Science Park Station

Discussions are taking place with the Department for Transport to agree the detail of how the scheme repayments will work, and with Network Rail to define the scope of the project and the partnership agreements that will deliver the Interchange. The station will have three platforms and initially is likely to be served by at least three northbound and four southbound trains per hour. A new Busway access will be provided from Milton Road, and pedestrian and cycle links will be provided to the surrounding residential areas and Business parks. Car access will be via Cowley Road. An ambitious project plan looks for the station to open in 2015.

Northstowe

The Northstowe Development Framework and the outline planning application for Phase 1 were submitted on 27 February by the joint promoters Gallaghers and Homes and Communities Agency. The application is now subject to public consultation. The County Council is preparing its response to these documents as a statutory consultee and is finalising a timetable for determination of the proposals with South Cambridgeshire District Council. The Phase 1 proposals include 1,500 homes; a primary school; 3.5 ha of employment land; a household recycling centre; and roads and other improvements. These and other issues are presently being considered, particularly provision of secondary education for the new community. It is expected that the Development Framework and the planning application will be presented to Cabinet on May 22.

Alconbury Enterprise Zone

The initial enabling application was approved in February and conditions are now being discharged for implementation; this largely relates to highway and access works, including the construction of three new gatehouses, a new access into the site from Ermine Street (B1043), a new boulevard within the Enterprise Zone and demolition of a number of existing buildings. An outline planning application for 5000 dwellings and 3 million sqft of employment space (c.5000 jobs) is expected to be submitted in June 2012. Huntingdonshire District Council is currently reviewing the Local Plan policy with a view to an approved policy being adopted in December, after which the planning application can be determined. Discussions are taking place regarding education and transport issues.

Cambridge North West

The County Council has responded (Cabinet, 15 November) to this major development proposal by Cambridge University of the NW quadrant of Cambridge city. We have holding objections on education, transport and s106 grounds. A further period of public consultation will follow the receipt of amendments with a view for the Joint Development Control Committee (JDCC) to determine the application in July 2012. A further report to Cabinet will consider the final s106

package prior to JDCC consideration.

Apprenticeships in Adult Learning and Skills

The first Apprenticeship posts have been advertised in Library Learning Services. The jobs attracted over 100 applicants which confirms for the services the popularity of this route into employment.

LEP (Local Enterprise Partnership) Enterprise Zone Bid

The Greater Cambridgeshire and Peterborough LEP, in partnership with the Adult Learning and Skills Service and other providers, has been successful in a bid for funding to the Enterprise Zone Skills Fund. Although the amount is fairly small, it will facilitate research into skills needs and support the link between schools, colleges and businesses. It will give support to the development of the Alconbury Skills Plan.

Community Learning Funding

The Adult Learning and Skills Service is preparing to bid to pilot the new model of delivery for Community Learning described in the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills as a "Community Learning Trust model". This model is not proposed to be a new legal entity, but rather to bring together local providers already funded by the Skills Funding Agency to plan for learning at a local community level. The Informal Adult Learning Partnerships will be the groups that will undertake the pilot as they have representation from local voluntary sector and other providers. The Informal Adult Learning Partnerships agreed at their last chairs meeting to rename themselves the Community Learning and Skills partnerships to better describe their remit for skills and the range of work they are undertaking.

The future of older people's day services

Following the review and consultation a vision statement for the future of day services and opportunities for older people in Cambridgeshire has been produced which is available at <http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/depts/adultsocialcare/olderpeople/Getting+involved.htm>

The vision recognises the value of day services to individuals and their carers where the individual has a long-term condition such as dementia, at the same time as making more effective use of the resources available through sharing. It focuses on the value of community support and prevention. The Quality for Adults Programme Board has endorsed the vision and a staged approach is being used to move forward work on delivering a modernised service.

Ageing Well in Cambridgeshire

Cambridgeshire County Council and partners have expressed a wish to develop a cross-county, strategic approach to the challenges faced by an ageing community with support from the Local Government Improvement and Development (LGID) Ageing Well Programme. The work will build on and complement the excellent work which is going on in the different localities and will help to inform the priorities for the newly-formed Health and Wellbeing Board and the Local Health Partnerships. The programme allocated free consultancy resources to Cambridgeshire to support this work. A series of workshops have been held over the last month involving officers from each of the district councils, councillors, voluntary and community organisations and older people themselves in conversations about health, wellbeing and local support networks. Work is expected to continue through the Local Health Partnerships, and a report on the work supported by LGID will be presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Cambridgeshire Learning Disability Parliament

The most recent meeting of the Cambridgeshire Learning Disability Parliament took place at the beginning of March. MPs welcomed guests from CCC to discuss employment, day services, abuse and rural issues that face people with learning disabilities. The Cambridgeshire Learning Disability Parliament is a great forum for people with learning disabilities to get involved in shaping services and welcomes new members.

County Councillor
John Reynolds
April 10th 2012